

Donna at Gateway Community and Technical College Gateway Health Profession Opportunity Project

Donna is a 53-year-old woman who moved to Kentucky from Tennessee two months prior to her enrollment as a student in Gateway's Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) program funded by the Administration for Children and Families' Office of Family Assistance. She worked as a Nurse Aid (NA) in Tennessee many years ago, but some life issues recently created a barrier that prevented her from working. Even though Donna was not working, she never let go of her passion to work with the elderly. Once she completed her move to Kentucky, she decided to enroll as a student at Gateway Community and Technical College to become an NA and pursue her dream. She had never attended college before and was nervous about how she would do in the class, but her confidence in herself and faith in God helped her overcome her fears.

Donna came to Gateway's Urban Center one day to talk to someone about how to enroll in the NA class. The Admissions Office sent her up to the HPOG suite for help with the NA class, and she met the case manager and learned more about the program. At the time, Donna was on a fixed income, unemployed, and living with a friend until she could find employment. After her conversation with the HPOG case manager, she saw HPOG as the extra support she needed to be successful.

Unfortunately, since Donna did not know how to use a computer, she was unable to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and the required background check to apply for the program. She felt very discouraged at that point, but with the HPOG case manager's assistance, she was able to complete these tasks online and apply for HPOG that day. She also learned that she would receive financial support from the HPOG program, which was essential for her to take the NA class.

Four weeks into the NA class, Donna became homeless. After discussing her options with the case manager, she temporarily moved in with another friend so she could complete her class and find a job. Later, once employed, Donna would be working with the community housing resources introduced to her by the HPOG case manager to find a permanent place to call her own.

With her positive personality, Donna gave many other students the encouragement and strength to get through the class. She shared with everyone her love of God and cooking, and she cooked full meals to bring in for her peers, instructor, and HPOG staff. Despite the challenges that she faced while in the class, she overcame them all through her perseverance. Donna even did her special praise dance in class to show her excitement when she passed her NA class. The nursing home where she did her clinical practice was so impressed with her work ethic and personality that they hope to hire her as a State Registered Nurse Aid as soon as Donna's Kentucky Nurse Aid Test (KNAT) test results are received.

On the last day of class, Donna talked about her experience with HPOG and Gateway's NA program: "I am so grateful for the help HPOG has given me. Without HPOG and my instructor, I don't know if I would have completed the program. I'm not going to stop here, though. I'm going to continue taking classes because I know I can do it."